

For the Fall Semester of 2008, I decided to lighten the load of my class schedule, or so I thought, and take an internship with the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office. After conversing with an unnamed professor, I determined that I wanted to intern with a crime analyst.

Arrangements were made with the Sheriff's Office for me to just intern with the crime analysts who work in Investigations.

On the first day of my internship I was to report to the admin building in order to receive directions to investigations. After driving aimlessly for ten minutes and then having to return to the admin building for better clarification of directions, I finally found the investigations building (CID). When I entered the building and identified myself, I was met with stares of confusion. No one knew that I was coming. Lt. Gay had been informed that there was an intern coming, but somewhere in the communication it was lost what day I would be arriving. I was quickly introduced to everyone in the office, ending with the crime analysts, Lauren Tomascho and Kathy Wilson who were quite surprised to see me as I was them. Not being prepared for my arrival, I was placed in the CID evidence room and told that I could read old cases, not the cold cases, until things got sorted out. I figured out when lunch was by the sounds of people moving and microwaves buzzing.

Just as the day neared its end, Lauren showed me how a photo line-up was done. The process is very time consuming and extremely manual. First, an image of the suspect taken against a neutral background must be obtained. The image is then transferred into the image program where it is placed in the position of choice. Next, the analyst has to gain access to the Florida Driver's License database and run a query for specific characteristics (i.e. gender, age, and race). Images of residents of Florida are returned. The analyst then has to visually search through each photo until five photos are obtained that closely resemble the suspect's image,

paying attention to key characteristics such as hair and facial hair. Although I did find this interesting, this was not what I had thought a crime analyst position entailed. After a few questions, I determined that what I really wanted to see was an evidence technician's job. By the end of the day I was freezing, unhappy, and feeling like I did not belong, but I decided to stick with it because I did not want to inconvenience everyone with a change in requests. How different things were on day 2!

The second day of my internship was MUCH better. Apparently I had no clue what a position as a crime analyst entailed, but I was certainly glad that I stuck with it anyway. I was placed at a desk in the front office so that I could also help the receptionist answer phones as needed. This was a welcomed task because I felt that I had been given something useful to do. This was also an opportune place to be because it placed me in the traffic of the office. As each investigator came through the front, I would stop and ask them what they were working on. Soon, conversation was flowing and as they would pass through, the investigators would provide me with a case number to look up and review. This was very exciting because I got a chance to familiarize myself with the way things happened at the Sheriff's Office.

The third day started with the real work. I was asked to assist Investigator Keith Matz in a forensic audit of financial records in an active fraud case. The case involved an employee of a local car rental agency that was allegedly stealing cash deposits and/or payments from customer contracts and misusing the company gas card. I was provided with a stack of documents to include bank records, store deposit sheets, store audit sheets, copies of the receipt books, and gas card statements. I then had to compile a spreadsheet that listed all the discrepancies between expected deposit amounts and actual deposit amounts. Everything was referenced by deposit dates, expected deposit dates, expected deposit amounts, actual deposit amounts, individual

transactions, and referenced store receipt numbers. Needless to say it was quite an intensive project that took me thirteen days to finish! I then met with the victim (store owner) and had to review the information with her to help clarify some minor issues before eventually having her swear to the audit. We then were able to acquire an arrest warrant and the suspect was eventually arrested.

The whole process of the forensic audit was very informational. I enjoyed the work and it put me in contact with a victim face to face. It helped me to experience a little of what the CID office has to deal with on a daily basis. During the time I was working on the forensic audit, and throughout the rest of my internship, I was also exposed to other things around the office. I was able to attend my first autopsies and I was constantly given photos of crime scenes and case histories to review. But I think the most exciting thing I was able to participate in was the issuance of a search warrant for child pornography. We were looking for any non-label (major manufacturer) pornographic material that was either on a computer or burned on CD/DVD. We also took any and all equipment connected to the computers as well as any cameras found in the residence. The search warrant was conducted in conjunction with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI). Ironically, I knew both the suspects and went to technical school with one of the OSI agents. The search warrant itself was very intense. Once I recognized the suspects as individuals I was in the military with, I tried to blend into the background so as to not be scene. Eventually, I was spotted, and it became a little awkward to be the individual going through their belongings. I was reassured by one of the investigators that this sort of thing happens all the time. They are constantly in contact with people they know on the other side of the law. I think this was a clear reality of the “us” versus “them” mentality.

Since I was only interning at investigations, I asked if I could perhaps spend a day with the evidence technicians. I have to say that their job is rather boring and uneventful, other than the occasional run to the FDLE lab in Pensacola to exchange evidence for testing. There are so many restrictions and policies that FDLE has that restricts the justice process. As for the evidence technicians, there are only two technicians that are allowed to process crime scenes. The other evidence technicians are basically evidence librarians. Upon seeing this, I was incredibly grateful that I was over at CID! The remainder of my internship was spent rather uneventful transcribing an interview on an active case and reviewing DVDs for pornographic content. I was still exposed to the constant buzz within the office and had many opportunities to watch the active interviewing process.

Overall I would say that I was “technically” prepared for the internship. I had the skills in place to perform all tasks that were handed to me. I was also able to offer my skills in other areas to the investigators as things came up. They found that I have a lot of random knowledge. I believe that the classes that prepared me the most were the Criminal Behavior and Drug Abuse classes. They contained applicable knowledge to this environment. I would have liked to have a better background in criminal behavior and perhaps common crimes and trends in each. I did find common behavior within the robberies, burglaries, and rape. But as for the internship as a whole, I strongly recommend interning in ONE specific division if at all possible as did I. There is so much to each division, and I do not believe that two weeks is enough time to become familiar with each division. As a result of my being able to become so familiar with CID and them with me, I was offered a position as an evidence technician upon someone else’s resignation.

On a side note, I was very welcomed in CID and at the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office as a whole. I was invited to participate in Birthday parties, baby showers, and quarterly award ceremonies. I even substituted in for absent parties in local charity events, such as the Mid Bay Bridge Walk-Run and the Jingle Bell Run at the landing, which the Sheriff's Office participated in as a team. I have never felt like I belonged to more of a family environment, even in past employment, than I have found there.